

**Biographical notes for WILLIAM STEILL BROWN**  
and  
**his wife ELIZA FINCH, a granddaughter of DR JOSEPH PRIESTLEY**  
with some  
**genealogical notes of their descendants**  
and  
**some biographical notes for JOHN FINCH (1791-1854)**  
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[MSS: typescript]

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Preferred citation:

Harris Manchester College Library and Archives, MSS,  
'Biographical notes for William Steill Brown, 2012'

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William Steill Brown (1800-1836) was born in Newcastle Upon Tyne, Northumberland, UK, on 11 October 1800; and baptized on 30 November 1800 as 'William Brown'. His parents were David Brown son of Archibald Brown, and Ann Steel daughter of William Steel. He had seven siblings, though few appear to have survived childhood.<sup>1</sup> The family were modest artisans, who attended Castle Garth Scotch Relief<sup>2</sup> Presbyterian chapel, where the ministers at the time were Rev David Gellatly (1763-1821)<sup>3</sup> and, from 1814, Rev James Arthur.

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara (b. 1796); Anne (b. 22 Apr 1798); Anne (b. 23 Apr 1799); Thomas (b. 10 Mar 1803); Jane (b. 13 Oct 1805); David (b. 26 Jul 1808); Archibald (b. 16 Jul 1808).

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish *Relief Presbyterians* were a secession group from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The secession, in 1761, was over the question of patronage, the Relief Presbyterians differing from the Scottish established church only in maintaining the right of each congregation to choose their own pastor.

<sup>3</sup> Who succeeded William Davidson in April 1801. David Gellatly was a Scottish minister whose first pastorate was at Haddington, East Lothian, in 1792. Shortly after that appointment, he was rebuked by the synod for equivocation; and, in October, 1793, he was ejected by the Relief Presbytery of Edinburgh, for "violent attempts on the chastity of young women", "cursing", "fraud", "lying", "slander", "perfidy". The issue provoked a brief pamphlet war: *A new mode of libelling, lately exhibited by the relief presbytery of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1794); *Clerical gallantry; or, some strictures on...A new mode of libelling* (Edinburgh, 1794); *Relief procedure justly exhibited* (Edinburgh, 1794). After his sacking, Gellatly remained in Haddington, preaching to a small group of local adherents. As well as pastor of the Castle Garth Chapel, Gellatly also served as local chaplain to the Ayrshire Militia while quartered in Newcastle. (E Mackenzie, *A descriptive and historical account of the town & county of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* [Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1827], 370-414). Gellatly attempted a new mode of attracting the notice of the religious public by issuing handbills, announcing that, on October 30, 1808, he would 'attempt and deliver a poetic sermon!' for the benefit of a benevolent establishment which 'in seventeen hundred and thirty-three, was instituted in London cit-tee.' The following year he gave 'a new Lecture, in original Poetry,' and a poetic sermon, called 'The Lilies of the Field.' He published several sermons: *A sermon, shewing the cause of war* (Edinburgh, 1794); *The cross of Christ, the tree of liberty* (Edinburgh, 1796); and *Wars and Rumours of Wars* (Gateshead, 1807), dedicated to the officers of the Ayrshire Militia. He also published a brief: *History and principles of the first*

Castle Garth congregation had originated about 1706, by the secession of part of the congregation of the old Close Gate Meeting, later Hanover Square Meeting.<sup>4</sup> The off-shoot congregation initially used an upper room at the Scotch Arms inn. Within a year or two, they built a new meeting house in Close Garth, near the Castle. Rev Ralph Dawson was their pastor, certainly from 1708, serving the congregation for up to thirty years.<sup>5</sup> It has been suggested that a large number of Scotch packmen and chapmen merchants, staying in the area, induced the congregation to join the Scotch Presbytery in Newcastle, in communion with the Church of Scotland.<sup>6</sup>

We don't know where Steill Brown got his schooling, or how it was paid for. His parents were of humble means, and it is likely that Steill Brown received some assistance from a local charitable fund. David Gellatly had opened a school for both sexes, and may have provided Steill Brown with grounding in Latin and Greek. Rev William Turner (1761-1859) of Hanover Square chapel is likely to have had a hand, too, both in helping source the funds, and in tutoring Steill Brown, Thomas Binney (1798-1874), and other local lads for entry to Academy.

### Wymondley Academy

About 1818 William expanded his name to William Steel Brown, and entered Wymondley Academy in Hertfordshire, which was maintained by the Coward Foundation. The Academy was the successor of Doddridge's Northampton Academy and its descendant at Daventry which, under Thomas Belsham (1750-1829), had become notoriously Unitarian. William Parry (1754-1819), who was the principal tutor at Wymondley, came from a decidedly Independent and Calvinist background. However, a number of students had become more liberal in their opinions, and were even said to be tainted with 'Socinian views'. This caused discord amongst the students, with the Evangelicals exhibiting a wilful intolerance. In 1816, John Bailey (1754-1818), Classics

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*constituted Presbytery of Relief; founded in consequence of the law of patronage* (Edinburgh, 1795).

<sup>4</sup> The Close Gate Meeting moved to Hanover Square in 1726. Rev. William Turner (1761-1859), a graduate from Warrington Academy, served nearly sixty years from 1782 until 1841, taking the congregation from Independent dissent into Unitarianism. Hanover Square may have maintained close links with Castle Garth. The Hanover Square congregation is now the Church of the Divine Unity in Ellison Place.

<sup>5</sup> At least by 1708. (W H D Longstaffe, *Memoirs of the life of Mr. Ambrose Barnes* [Durham, 1867], 455)

<sup>6</sup> There is a tradition that Castle Garth congregation was founded about 1706 under Thomas Bradbury (1677-1759) (*History, directory, and gazetteer, of the counties of Durham and Northumberland* (Leeds, 1827) I, lxx). However, Bradbury had moved to London in 1703, and there is no evidence for a subsequent return to Northumberland. Bradbury had been Assistant to Richard Gilpin (1625-1700) at Close Gate Meeting, from the end of 1699, following the death of Timothy Manlove (1663-1699), Gilpin's previous assistant. After Gilpin's death, 13 Feb 1700 n.s., the congregation elected Benjamin Bennett (1674-1726) to succeed him. In London, in 1706, Bradbury expressed his displeasure at not having been offered a co-pastorate at Close Gate. (W H D Longstaffe, 449).

Tutor, wrote to the Coward Trustees to say that seven or eight students were discontented because:

- the seminary was very generally characterized as a Socinian one, because persons were admitted from that connexion, and who themselves were hostile to Evangelical truth, both during the course of their studies and when entered into the Christian ministry;
- that in consequence of this unfavourable character, the churches applied not to Wymondley for supplies, therefore there was not opportunity afforded them for exercising themselves in ministerial services, nor for introducing themselves to the religious public;
- that they had none to recommend them to congregations when they had finished their studies. Therefore, this circumstance, in connection with the prejudices against them, rendered it highly improbable that they should be engaged and settled as ministers of the gospel;
- that several had such difficulties of a pecuniary nature to struggle with, as they could not surmount; their supplies being so inadequate to their unavoidable expenses, that they could not with the most rigid economy avoid contracting debt, which they had no prospect of paying;
- and, finally, some ventured to say they had not been attended to in their studies by [William Parry], as they wished.<sup>7</sup>

Previous to this, on 20 March 1816, one of the Wymondley students, James Buckham,<sup>8</sup> wrote to James Bennett (1774-1862), Tutor at Rotheram Independent Academy (the successor of James Scott's Heckmondwike Academy), to seek a transfer:

What I consider to be our great objection against the mode in which the Institution is conducted, is that the students are seldom or never introduced to any scene of usefulness. You will perhaps be surprised when I inform you that there is not a single congregation connected with this Institution, except a small one at Stevenage. The consequence of this is the students are but very seldom called to preach. I believe the two senior students have not been sent out above twice since Midsummer, and no other but the senior class is allowed to preach. Thus we are so excluded from all possibility of doing any good, not being permitted to preach in the villages around us, where there are many perishing for lack of knowledge. None are permitted to preach till their fifth year, and even then it is but seldom that they make themselves useful. The students are suspected by many to be Socinians, and consequently are dreaded by most of the congregations to which they may be sent. Many, therefore, after they have spent five years in making preparations for the ministry, are compelled to give it up entirely.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John Waddington, *Congregational History, continuation to 1850* (London 1878), 256-7.

<sup>8</sup> Born about 1795; pastor at Hinckley 1818-39, after which he emigrated to the USA and Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in John Waddington, 257-8.

The Coward Trustees decided that James Buckham and Ebenezer Corbishley (1797-1880), who had made a similar application to Hoxton Academy, should 'leave Wymondley House with the least possible delay.' The two men were allowed to retain their rooms for a few days while they made arrangements, but were no longer to be considered members of the student body.

William Parry died 9 January 1819, following which there were several changes of Tutor, until the arrival in 1821 of Thomas Morell (1781-1840), who restored some order. It was during this unsettled interregnum that William Steill Brown arrived at Wymondley, to be stimulated by the freedom of thought, but dismayed by the divisions within the house. James Martineau, who heard it all from Steill Brown, takes up the story:

In the year 1820, there occurred a kind of theological insurrection and secession at Wymondley. One of the elder students, Noah Jones,<sup>10</sup> a youth of bright endowments and genial disposition, was accused by some vigilant fellow students of heterodox preaching, and brought up for virtual trial before the authorities of the college.<sup>11</sup>

His mind could not be satisfied with the views which were expounded by the Tutors, and which the students were expected to adopt and to preach. It was not in his nature to conceal the change that was coming over his mind, and, exercising the right he claimed of free thought and free speech, he soon brought upon himself the suspicion of heresy....It appears that there was at this time a party amongst the students holding strictly "orthodox" opinions, who were willing to act with the Tutors in preventing the growth of "dangerous opinions" in the institution.

[Noah Jones was summoned before the Tutors, but] denied their authority to require of him a statement of his creed. He had been guided by a sincere desire to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, and to act according to the dictates of a clear conscience; but he could acknowledge no human authority in matters of religion. It was not only Mr Jones's own change of views that was deplored and condemned, but also his influence on the minds of the other students, many of whom sympathized with him in the general tone of his views; and he appears to have been at this time a leading spirit among a band of young men who were becoming imbued with the principles of a liberal faith....[The Coward Trustees invited him to leave the Academy.] He left at once, to the great regret of many of his fellow-students, whose respect and love he had won; and at parting they presented him with an

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<sup>10</sup> Born 13 Jan 1801 at Etruria, Staffs; died 28 Aug 1861 at Gateacre, Lancs. Successively minister at Bank Street, Bolton; Todmorton, West Riding; Northampton'; Friar Street, Derby; Gateacre, Lancs.

<sup>11</sup> James Martineau to George Washington Hosmer, 14 Jan 1865, quoted in 'FWH' [William Henry Furness], 'Rev William S Brown,' *The Monthly Religious Magazine* (Boston, MS, 1866), xxxv, 333-7.

address, bearing testimony to the excellent spirit he had uniformly displayed in the common hall, to the amiableness of his temper and the rectitude of his principles. To this address were appended the names of ten students, viz., Thomas Binney, W S Brown, Samuel Allard, J Mitchelson, E R Dimock, E Jay, G Robson, T Middleton, J Pearce, S A Davies.<sup>12</sup>

All the ten were undoubtedly affected with the heretical tendencies of their companion, and all of them, with the exception of Binney who adhered to the independents, resigned their places in the Coward's College and joined the Unitarians.<sup>13</sup> W S Brown was at once taken up by the fatherly kindness of the good William Turner of Newcastle, and on his recommendation sent to Manchester New College,<sup>14</sup> then at York, in 1821, to complete his academic career. There it was that, on my entrance next year, I first made his acquaintance.<sup>15</sup>

### **Manchester New College, York**

Although Martineau makes no mention of it, it appears that Steill Brown accompanied his friend and fellow Newcastle lad James Binney to London, where they spent some time with Thomas Belsham, who was by then minister at Essex Street chapel, the headquarters of the Unitarian Church. Steill Brown later referred to Belsham as his 'dear and revered personal friend.' Whilst James Binney could not accept Unitarianism, and returned to the restructured Wymondley Academy under the new leadership of Thomas Morell, William Steill Brown transferred to Manchester New College, York. Martineau continues:

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<sup>12</sup> R Aspland (ed.), *The Christian reformer* (London, 1861) XVII(ns), 748-9. Thomas BINNEY (1798-1874) was a member of the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, and a leading figure in Congregationalism. Samuel ALLARD, son of William Allard (1767-1831), continued his education at Glasgow, supported by Dr Williams's Foundation; subsequently minister at at Hinckley and High Street Chapel, Stockport. (Univ. Glasgow Spec. Coll. MS Gen 1717/3/2/6: letter Duncan Macfarlan to J Wainwright 27 Mar 1824). John MITCHELSON (1797-aft 1840), continued his education at Manchester College York; later minister at Old Meeting, Warminster. Edward Robinson DIMMOCK (d. 1867), minister at Cairo Street Chapel, Warrington 1822-1841. In 1823, he married Mrs Margaret Gaskell (1780-1850), the mother-in-law of Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell the novelist (B Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity* (Manchester, 1890), 224. Edward JAY (ca 1798), said to have been born at Bath. George ROBSON (b 1799). Thomas MIDDLETON (b 1801), became an Anglican clergyman. John PEARCE (1796-1857), minister at Chester Street, Wrexham. Samuel Ambrose DAVIES (1800-1865), son of Rev Edward Davies of Ipswich; S A Davies was pastor of the Congregational Church of Christ, Enfield, 1829 (The Congregational magazine London, 1829, V, 287).

<sup>13</sup> The Coward Trust Minute Book states: '15th December, 1820. — A paper from Mr. Binney to the Trustees was read. It appeared that Mr. Binney and Mr. Brown had withdrawn themselves from Wymondley in consequence of the expulsion of Mr. Robson and Mr Nicholson.' (Dr Williams's Library; cited in John Waddington, 262).

<sup>14</sup> The successor of Warrington Academy, where William Turner was educated.

<sup>15</sup> James Martineau to George Washington Hosmer, 14 Jan 1865, quoted in 'FWH'.

Though I was a year or so beyond the Junior Freshman's age (having turned from civil engineering to the ministry),<sup>16</sup> Brown was so much older, that, for a session or two, it never occurred to me to regard myself as on the level of his friendship....Affinities of temperament, however, work their way through wider distances than this; and Brown, who, though rather a dreamer, was a quick observer too, found out that some of his enthusiasms were strongly reflected in me .... we both of us revered Wordsworth in poetry, Berkeley in philosophy, Channing,—then a new power among us—in religion; so that there was common atmosphere enough, at a time when the wings were growing, for many a flight together. Brown was never a severe student, somewhat indolent and dreamy by constitution, and liable to fits of severe depression...In an irregular way he had read a great deal, and his quick absorbing faculty turned the results to account, not in the shape of organised knowledge, but in a certain enrichment of nature, and flexibility of thought, which gave a charm to his conversation, and made you feel the presence of an accomplished man. He wrote well; he spoke well; though like many men, who on rising to a higher social level have had to learn a new dialect, he contracted a dread of homely language, and a tendency to over-refinement, which sometimes amused his friends, and turned even his own good-humoured laugh against himself. I remember an instance. He had to translate in class a passage from the Histories of Tacitus (II, 20) where *Cacina* is spoken of as "*braccas tegmen barbarum indutus*:" and was proceeding with his delicate paraphrase "*clad after barbarian fashion in a species of habiliment intended for the lower part of the person*," when the professor cut him short with an "*umph; commonly called 'breeches' Mr Brown*."<sup>17</sup>

### **Marriage, and ministries in England**

After leaving York, Brown may have secured a brief assistantship under Rev Joseph Hutton (1790-1860) at Mill Hill chapel, Leeds; for it was at Leeds, 8 July 1825, that he married Eliza Finch, a granddaughter of Dr Joseph Priestley.<sup>18</sup> Following his marriage, Steill Brown settled as pastor to the Unitarian Baptist, octagonal, Bowl-alley Lane chapel, Kingston-upon-Hull. However, after little more than a year, a sense of 'restlessness' led William and Eliza in 1826 to remove to Bridgwater, Somerset.

Eliza Finch was the fifth child of William Finch (1756-1831) and Sarah ['Sally'] Priestley (1763-1803),<sup>19</sup> and the only one of their seven children to marry.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In Sept 1822, James Martineau was seventeen years old.

<sup>17</sup> James Martineau to George Washington Hosmer, 14 Jan 1865, quoted in 'FWH'.

<sup>18</sup> Eliza Finch was born at Heath-Forge, Wombourne, Staffs, 26 April 1795.

<sup>19</sup> William Finch was a nephew of John Finch of the nail-making and banking family of Dudley, who had also married into the family of Samuel Shore of Sheffield. Sarah Priestley was the eldest child and only daughter of Dr Joseph Priestley.

On arriving in Bridgwater, with fresh ideas, Steill Brown introduced a new liturgy; though it was later abandoned by his successor.<sup>21</sup> Like so many dissenting ministers, he established a school for local boys; and, it appears that he also played an active part in local affairs. During the winter of 1826-7 he gave a course of Tuesday evening lectures on Astronomy, to the Mechanics Institute.<sup>22</sup> When the agitation for parliamentary reform was at its height, Steill Brown joined the Bridgwater Political Union, attended public meetings, and made some 'spirited speeches' in support of various resolutions.<sup>23</sup> On Tuesday 19 June 1832, the 'Reformers' of Bridgwater celebrated the passing of the Reform Bill:

The morning was ushered in by a merry peal from the tower, together with firing of cannon from the Dock-yard, and other demonstrations of joy continued at intervals throughout the day. The noble Market-house afforded a grand area for a public dinner, and was elegantly decorated for the occasion. Nearly 500 persons sat down to a repast, which, with the excellence of the wines, reflected the highest credit to Messrs Jennings and Gandell, by whom the dinner was provided....The day was greatly enlivened by an excellent band from Cannington....The first toast given after dinner was "The King" which was received with three times three hearty cheers, the band playing the national tune of God save the King, then followed "The People, the only source of legitimate power." [Steill Brown, among others, gave a short address.]<sup>24</sup>

William and Eliza had four children at Bridgwater, though only three have been identified:<sup>25</sup> 1. Gertrude 'Wyoming' Brown (2 Nov 1826-12 Sep 1896); 2.

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<sup>20</sup> Children of WILLIAM FINCH and SARAH PRIESTLEY:

1. ANNA FINCH, 9 Apr 1788-26 Feb 1809. Anna-Laetitia Barbauld wrote a brief obituary and poem. (*Monthly Repository* [London, 1809], iv, 171-2)
2. WILLIAM FINCH Jr, 8 Jan 1790-3 May 1804.
3. JOHN FINCH, 17 Sep 1791-1854; geologist.
4. MARY FINCH, 28 May 1793-10 May 1807. (*Monthly Repository* [London, 1808], ii, 282)
5. ELIZA FINCH, 26 April 1795-1835; married Rev WILLIAM STEILL BROWN.
6. LUCY FINCH, 2 Apr 1797-18 Sep 1860; schoolmistress, of Edgbaston.
7. CATHERINE IRENE FINCH, 3 Oct 1801-27 Oct 1883; schoolmistress and writer of moral tales for children.

<sup>21</sup> Jerom Murch, *A history of the Presbyterian and General Baptist churches in the west of England* (London 1835) 183.

<sup>22</sup> Steill Brown gave the first of these on 19 December 1826 (*Morning Post* (London), 27 Dec 1826).

<sup>23</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* 27 Oct 1831, reporting a public Reform meeting held at Bridgwater 17 Oct 1831.

<sup>24</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 23 Jun 1832

<sup>25</sup> The dates of birth of the three identified children are provided in the Births and Baptisms Register of Christ Church Unitarian chapel (TNA, RG4/142). Two sources record that the Steill Brown's had four children: William Henry Furness mentions the couple having 'four sweet children' ('FWH'); Rev Dr G W Hosmer refers to the accidental death of a [fourth] child. (Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society and Archives, MSS B00-3, *A biographical notice of the Rev Wm Steill Brown*, 1866 [MS draft of a lecture by George Washington Hosmer].)



unidentified child, (ca. 1828 -1835); 3. Isabel Brown (12 Oct 1829-aft 1860); 4. Edward William Brown (2 Feb 1831-1835). It seems that Steill Brown retained the Baptist leanings that he had imbued at Hull, for the Births and Baptisms Register of Christ Church Unitarian chapel indicates that the Brown children were not baptized; likewise a few other children of the congregation. It seems he baptized the children of parents who sought it, but did not encourage infant baptism.

At the end of 1831, Eliza's brother John Finch (1791-1854) returned to England, having spent almost a decade travelling throughout the United States and Canada. He settled for a while at Bristol, which enabled him frequently to visit his sister and brother-in-law. John Finch clearly painted a glamorous picture of the opportunities available to a young settler family in frontier America, where land could be had cheaply, and they would see its value subsequently soar. William Steill Brown, who felt the social pressures of a poor man from a working-class family who had been thrust into a middle-class environment, was soon 'bent on going to the West' to make his fortune.<sup>26</sup> Rev Dr George Washington Hosmer, who gave a lecture on Steill Brown in 1866, gave a more romantic reason for their emigration:

England did not give them air they could breathe, nor room to move. They longed for something different...They were enthusiasts for reform and for civil and religious liberty; and here in this new unencumbered country, they thought they should find life full of sap, and pliant, easy to be bent into forms of strength and beauty. Dr Channing was their star in the west. They had read his splendid articles in the *Christian Examiner* on the "Puritan Fathers", and "Milton", and "Buonaparte" which appeared about 1827 and 1828, and it seemed to them that the air he breathed should inspire and satisfy them.<sup>27</sup>

*The Unitarian Chronicle* reported their sailing, from Bristol on 14 August 1832, in the *Pilot*, for Boston: 'The congregation have sustained a serious loss in his removal, and will long and deeply regret the departure of a Minister, who united with talents of a very high order a kind and amiable disposition, that won the hearts of all who had the happiness of knowing him.'<sup>28</sup> The same journal printed Steill Brown's letter of resignation, dated 15 July 1832:

Those of you with whom I have enjoyed the pleasure of daily, and almost hourly, intercourse, must be well aware how long and how profoundly I have admired the religious, moral, and political situation of the United States, and how earnestly I have wished, both for myself and children, to enjoy a situation so favourable in my opinion to the happy development of

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<sup>26</sup> 'FWH', 333.

<sup>27</sup> Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

<sup>28</sup> *The Unitarian chronicle and companion to the monthly repository, for 1832* (London, 1832), i, 168.

the moral and intellectual character. I think my course clearly marked out, leading to the attainment of larger means of usefulness and comfort to myself, and ultimately to a degree of *prosperity* to my children, which in this, my native land, it would be absurd to anticipate.

The reply of the congregation is dated a week later:

We cannot refrain from expressing the deep regret we feel at the prospect of parting from a Minister whose high character and distinguished abilities have obtained the respect and admiration of Christians of all denominations, and have been eminently successful in allaying the prejudice and bigotry with which the Unitarians have been hitherto regarded.

A further address was signed by many Bridgwater residents, Anglicans, Independents, Baptists, Quakers, and Methodists, as well as by Unitarians:

Whilst we sincerely lament that this country does not offer those prospects of future independence for your family which you may fairly expect to realize in America...Those of us who have had the good fortune to place our sons with you as a teacher, cannot allow this opportunity to pass without expressing our acknowledgments of the advantages they have received under your tuition, as well as our unfeigned thanks for the kind and gentlemanly treatment they have invariably experienced at your hands; we consider your qualifications in this respect to be of the highest order, and we can only contemplate your complete success, should you have the happiness to be thrown into a society by whom they can be fully appreciated.

Steill Brown also received the proceeds of a subscription by his congregation, and 'a handsome piece of plate,' from his neighbours, inscribed: 'To the Rev William Steill Brown, by his friends at Bridgewater, as a token of their high esteem and regard, and of their very sincere regret at his departure from his native land. 10th August, 1832.'<sup>29</sup>

### **In America**

Arriving at Boston, William Steill Brown first introduced himself to the famous preacher Dr William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), now an invalid, though still foremost amongst the liberal theologians in America at the time. Channing and his fellow pastor Ezra Stiles Gannett (1801-171) invited Steill Brown to give a sermon at their Federal Street Unitarian church in Boston. William Henry Furness (1802-96), pastor of the First Unitarian church of Philadelphia, was in the congregation:

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<sup>29</sup> *The Unitarian chronicle*, 168-70.

It was every way excellent; the best I had then heard from an Englishman; earnest, spiritual, and decidedly attractive to a youngster like myself.<sup>30</sup>

Steill Brown's arrival caused quite a stir in Boston; Eliza 'greatly interested [Furness's] female friends; his four sweet children completed the charm.' Bostonians seem to have regretted that they only stayed a couple of weeks. It had been William and Eliza's intention to travel directly to the 'West where a glorious future seemed to be dawning upon humanity',<sup>31</sup> but the success of his sermon led to Steill Brown being invited to found a Unitarian Congregational Church in Buffalo, New York state. The Steill Browns arrived at Buffalo one Friday in October in a violent storm, during which the attic room where the congregation had been used to meet, above Stephenson's jewellery store in Main Street, was consumed by fire. On the Sunday, Steill Brown held his first service at a schoolhouse on the corner of Pearl and Mohawk Streets. Within a year, though, a church was building on the corner of Franklin and Eagle Streets.

However, the Steill Browns had difficulty in adapting to the frontier attitudes of rural Americans at the time. Compared with the 'polite' society of Bridgwater, the citizens of Buffalo were rude and uncultured. Eliza, especially, was seen as 'daintily refined ... wedded to English ways, not easily satisfied with any other, and quite incapable of conforming to the necessities of frontier life.' She was used to coal fires, whereas in Buffalo the only fuel was wood. Visitors would call and find her 'impatient and despairing of making wood burn, without andirons.' She had hopes, too, of an English garden, and designed a plan for a garden with parterres, and serpentine walks, and terraces; but the only gardening assistance she could get was from a German labourer, who, having listened to Mrs Brown's ideas, and studied the elegant plans, 'shouldered his hoe and shovel, and with very crooked Dutch words, hardly relevant or polite, went off up Genesee Street,' never to be seen again.

Steill Brown was highly regarded, though considered somewhat intellectual. Educated persons thought him a very good preacher, 'thoroughly earnest, sensible, and learned;' but his manner of speech seemed to have distanced him from 'the multitude':

Some men carry their heads in their hearts, or their hearts in their heads, and glow readily, every thought hot with feeling. Whitefield was the type of this kind ....The power of Mr Brown's preaching was in his thought, intellect, conscience, more than in feeling or dramatic tack; and yet he was not cold. I hear of discourses, and prayers in those rude attic lofts, that were worthy of cathedral accompaniments, and have been treasured up by a few who heard them.

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<sup>30</sup> 'FWH'

<sup>31</sup> 'FWH'

The fine library he kept at his home on the north side of Huron Street, a little eastward of Delaware, astonished all his visitors:

Nothing pleased him so well, as to sit down with a friend among his books, and talk of religion, philosophy, and human destiny. His enthusiasm would kindle as he thought of what might and must be done to clear away the rubbish of the dark ages, and open ways of enlightened progress.<sup>32</sup>

During his brief sojourn in Buffalo, Steill Brown edited a periodical, *The Examiner, or theological and literary repository* (Buffalo, 1833), to which, it is probable, Eliza contributed some articles. Eloquent enough in the pulpit, unlike his bluff neighbours, he was shy in 'the ordinary side-walk intercourse;' though 'a fine talker, and most agreeable companion, when the outer gate of ceremony was passed.' He was decidedly too English,—'English in dress, tone, way of life, choice of amusements, every thing.' There were financial problems, too. Servants were expensive, and Steill Brown had no personal resources. His few dedicated supporters financed him 'beyond their ability, because he was exceedingly popular; but it was a load far beyond their strength.' Self-denial on the part of the Steill Browns would have lightened the load; but they were visionaries, not realists: 'they had no doubt of finding all kinds of social comforts and literary privileges in the newest parts of the land.'

Though his own congregation appreciated him, Steill Brown faced vehement opposition from some other local ministers, particularly the itinerant fanatic revivalist Methodist preacher Rev Jedediah Burchard (1790-1864), who derided him from the pulpit, and, for three nights running, slandered Thomas Belsham. Steill Brown was present on one of these occasions and 'was so exasperated that he arose in the midst of the congregation and pronounced certain assertions of Mr Burchard about Mr Belsham of England, *utter falsehoods*. Finding himself upon his feet interrupting the preacher, he apologized to the congregation, saying he was borne away by his feelings, at hearing a very dear and revered personal friend so vilified. He asked Mr Burchard to meet him in public debate, and when this was refused, he preached a discourse on harsh judgement.'<sup>33</sup>

During 1833, Mrs Steill Brown's health declined, and she felt unable to face another Buffalo winter. She knew she had relatives somewhere in the south. Believing them to be in Tennessee, she moved with her children to Nashville, lodging at the City Hotel. William, who had dedicated the cornerstone of the new chapel on 11 August, remained at his post to consecrate the completed building. He left to join his wife in spring 1834. He was utterly destitute of funds. He found friends in Rev Dr Philip Lindsley (1786-1855), President of Nashville University, and David Craighead (1790-1849). Robert

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<sup>32</sup> This and preceding quotations are taken from Buffalo and Erie Historical Society.

<sup>33</sup> Buffalo and Erie Historical Society.

and Joseph Woods, merchants and bankers in the city, provided a subscription for a few months, but his preaching attracted little interest. Steill Brown even proposed to give some lectures at the Masonic Hall, on *Phrenology*, in which there was a growing interest; but without success.<sup>34</sup> Eliza, herself, advertized an intention of starting a school:

#### SELECT SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES

Mrs Steill Brown proposes to undertake the education of twelve young ladies. The session will commence the 1st day of November. Terms \$50 per session. Latin, French, Italian and drawing taught without extra charge. References:- Rev Dr Lindsley, D Craighead, Esq, and Robert Woods Esq. City Hotel<sup>35</sup>

Regarding her interest in education, earlier that year, Eliza had written a newspaper article criticising the exclusive study of mathematics and the dead languages from ‘the incompleteness of that system in the objects of education which it proposes.’ Without using the word *induction*, she proposed that whilst a mathematician can commence with some given axiom and reason consecutively so as to advance ‘from one admitted fact to whatever is the result of that fact,’ this is not in itself teaching a person to think. She proposed that as well as the faculties of ‘fixing the attention’ and ‘thinking consecutively’, we must add a third faculty: ‘the power of judging.

This is the fundamental power, and the others are, strictly speaking, subordinate faculties, and the danger of trusting too much to the study of mathematics lies precisely in this losing sight of the supreme importance of the judgment.

Rather than advocating a *liberal education*, Mrs Steill Brown, stressed the importance of expertise in particular spheres of life, legal matters for a lawyer, medicine for a physician, &c.<sup>36</sup>

During that winter, Eliza learned that her uncle William Priestley’s family were, in fact, in Louisiana. The Steill Browns travelled to New Orleans early in 1835. With her health failing, Eliza may have been admitted to Charity Hospital in its new building in the Faubourg of St. Marie; it was in New Orleans, at the end of summer, that she died. She was buried 3 October in Plaquemines parish, to the south of the city.<sup>37</sup> One of their children is said to have died a little later, of a fall.<sup>38</sup>

Following the Battle of San Jacinto in April 1836, and the disappearance of Mexican troops to the other side of the Rio Grande by June, settlers again left

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<sup>34</sup> *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, 29 Oct & 7 Nov, 1834

<sup>35</sup> *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, 17 Oct 1834.

<sup>36</sup> *National Banner and Daily Advertiser* (Nashville), 7 February 1834

<sup>37</sup> Priestley Toulmin, ‘The descendants of Joseph Priestley,’ *The Northumberland County Historical Society Proceedings* (Sunbury, PA, 1994), xxxii, Appendix.

<sup>38</sup> Buffalo and Erie Historical Society.

New Orleans for the river trip to Brazoria, the main port for Stephen Austin's colony. Taking his son and two daughters, William Steill Brown joined these 'Austin colonists', but within a few weeks, his son Edward William died. William Steill Brown joined him, on 4 August 1836; he lies buried at Columbia, Texas.<sup>39</sup>

His two daughters aged eight and five years, were left orphaned in a strange land. A letter was sent to a friend in Buffalo, from whence this unnamed Good Samaritan travelled to Columbia, collected the girls and took them back to Louisiana, where their mother's uncle and aunt, William and Margaret Priestley, took them in at their sugar plantation in St James parish, and at the home of Catherine and Henry D Richardson in New Orleans.<sup>40</sup> Some time afterwards, the Priestleys placed the two girls with the family of Colonel Isaac Trimble Preston (1793-1852), sometime Attorney General of Louisiana, though evidence for a formal adoption or wardship has not emerged.<sup>41</sup> Gertrude named her first son Princeton *Preston*, and a daughter Catherine *Preston*, in recognition of Col. Preston's benevolence.

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<sup>39</sup> Janet Wethy Foley, *Early Settlers of New York State* (New York 1934) i, 143. Ms Foley gives the year of William's death as 1835, but this must be mistaken, since Eliza certainly predeceased him.

<sup>40</sup> William and Margaret Priestley's daughter, Catherine Caroline Priestley (ca 1801-1865) married Henry Dickenson Hobson (1809-1854) on 22 Jan 1835.

<sup>41</sup> As Rev Dr G W Hosmer suggested Colonel Isaac T Preston is the brother of John Smith Preston (1809-1881) of South Carolina.

**Children of WILLIAM STEILL BROWN and ELIZA FINCH:**

1. Gertrude ‘Wyoming’ BROWN (2 Nov 1826-12 Sep 1896); she appears to have been given a middle or pet name of ‘Wyoming’, perhaps from Thomas Campbell’s poem: *Gertrude of Wyoming*. Gertrude married the French-born Pierre Simon REYNAUD (4 Sep 1809-13 Oct 1871), in about 1846, as his second wife. They lived in Ouachita parish, LA, but moved to Houston, TX in 1856. The 1880 census shows her niece Bella B SANFORD, living with her, perhaps because Bella’s parents, Isabel and William, had died by then. Gertrude gave him a further six children. Gertrude’s death is recorded in the *The Dallas Morning News* 13 September 1896:

REYNAUD—Houston, Tex., Sept. 12—This evening the death of Mrs Gertrude REYNAUD occurred at the family home, 414 Capitol avenue. She first came to Texas when a child with the Austin colony, but returned to Louisiana. Again she came here in 1856, since which time Texas has been her home. She was 69 years old, and a native of England.

2. Unidentified child, (ca. 1828 -1835); died of a fall in New Orleans.
3. Isabel BROWN (12 Oct 1829-aft 1860); married William SANFORD in Ouachita parish LA, 22 Feb 1855. Two children are known. Isabel and William may both have died before 1880, when their younger daughter, Bella was living with her aunt Gertrude REYNAUD. Elder child, Mary SANFORD, born ca. 1858. Younger child Bella B SANFORD (Sep 1865-12 Oct 1943); married her first cousin Gustave Henry REYNAUD, when aged only fourteen.
4. Edward William BROWN (2 Feb 1831-ca Aug 1836); died about the same time as his father, shortly after his arrival in Texas. Probably buried with his father in Columbia, TX.

**Children of PIERRE REYNAUD AND GERTRUDE BROWN:**

1. Isabella REYNAUD (13 Oct 1847-6 Dec 1888); married David William QUARLES (1845-76), 19 Dec 1866
  - Samuel Princeton QUARLES (1 March 1868-3 July 1931); married Mabel W HUNTER (1877-1960).
    - Virginia QUARLES (1899-1947), married Joseph W CURTIN.
    - Warrene QUARLES (1904-1951), married Oliver C HANGER.
    - Samuel P QUARLES Jr (1906-1983), married Marianna PLATT.
  - David William QUARLES (19 June 1870-23 June 1928); married Louise W MAY (Mar 1875-1926), 29 November 1893.
    - Isabella Mathilde QUARLES (12 Oct 1894-); married Samuel Edwin PEARCE
    - Marie L QUARLES (Mar 1897-)
  - Curtis Blakeman QUARLES (19 Oct 1876-22 Dec 1935); married Ella M BLAFFER (1879-1940).
    - Curtis Blaffer QUARLES (8 May 1905-2 Mar 1983), married Jean GUTHRIE.
    - Dorothy QUARLES (1909-)
2. Princeton Preston REYNAUD (ca 1850-ca 1889), married Lelia Augusta RIDDICK (1857-1942), 15 Sep 1881.
  - Gertrude Alice REYNAUD (17 Jul 1882-5 Jul 1969); married Edward Sykes WOODHEAD (6 Mar 1879-8 Jan 1960)
  - William Armaunt REYNAUD (12 May 1884-2 Sep 1957); seed merchant. Married Sabra 'Sallie' Lois WYNNE (1892-1981).
    - Sabra Adair REYNAUD (3 Jan 1920-)
  - Charles Princeton REYNAUD (20 Oct 1887-20 Jun 1943); married Mary MEEK, daughter of Hutton R MEEK, about 1912
    - Mary C REYNAUD (ca 1916-)
    - Charles P REYNAUD (19 Mar 1917-13 Aug 2005), married Mary (ca 1894)
    - Pierre REYNAUD (28 Nov 1921-15 Feb 1980), married Lou Anna CURRY (1936-2006)
  - Lummie Belle REYNAUD (1891-1961); married Stephen Aven HERBERT
    - Stephen Aven Herbert (1 Jul 1923-)
3. Catherine (Kate) Preston REYNAUD (29 Feb 1852-24 June 1902); married Francis W ALBERTSON, 9 Oct 1871
  - Gertrude Louise ALBERTSON (1872-13 Oct 1929); married Eugene Wm LEMAN (1866-1948), 15 October 1894.
    - Catherine LEMAN (1896-)
    - Eugenia L LEMAN (7 Nov 1897-12 Mar 1992); married Henry Fagan TEESE (1895-1985)
  - Penelope ALBERTSON (2 Apr 1875-18 Jul 1922); married Frederick C RIEMANN (1869-1922).
    - Wentworth Arnold RIEMANN (1903-1979)



- Catherine ALBERTSON (Sep 1878-)
  - Benjamin Reynaud ALBERTSON (1890-1964)
- 4 Gustave Henry REYNAUD (31 Jul 1854-7 June 1894); married his young first cousin, Bella B SANFORD, 2 Oct 1880.
- Thomas Preston REYNAUD (2 Aug 1881-6 Aug 1966)
  - Isabelle REYNAUD (Nov 1884-14 Sep 1903)
  - D E REYNAUD (Aug 1889-)
  - (Miss) Gustave Henry REYNAUD (Sep 1894-), married Maynard Walter CHANCE (27 June 1893-7 Jul 1976) 10 June 1915. The family moved to Los Angeles about 1929.
    - Etta Margaret (Peggy) CHANCE (24 April 1917-28 Jul 2007), married J Alan FARNON<sup>42</sup>
    - Maynard Walter CHANCE (25 May 1919-2 Jun 1919)
    - Maynard Reynaud CHANCE (15 Sep 1920-21 Apr 1980)
    - Sanford (Sandy) Layton CHANCE (20 Feb 1923-14 Dec 2006)
- 5 William Armaunt REYNAUD (ca 1857-10 May 1884).
- 6 Oscar E REYNAUD (ca 1861-ca 1928); Clerk of Harris county criminal court. Married Penelope FIELD in September 1900, Oscar headed the Reception Relief Committee at Houston, for the refugees from the Hurricane at Galveston.
- Oscar Field REYNAUD (17 Nov 1900-12 May 1973); married Imogene Gladys CALHOUN (4 Feb 1905-18 Aug 2003)<sup>43</sup>
    - Shirley REYNAUD (ca 1931) married-1 Charles W ZORN, 3 Jun 1976; married-2 John C DUKE 29 June 1990; child: Roberta A ZORN, married James G SHOOPMAN 30 Mar 1985.

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<sup>42</sup> 'Peggy was born on April 24, 1917 in Austin, Texas to the delight of her father, Maynard "Punky" Chance and stepmother, "Bob" Chance. In 1942, in Los Angeles she married J. Alan Farnan. While in the Los Angeles area Peggy worked 30 years as an executive secretary for Armco Steel. At retirement, Alan and Peggy moved to Bear Valley Springs, building one of the first homes on Skyline. They celebrated 42 years of marriage together before his passing in 1984. Peggy was an exacting person, very precise, and it showed in all she did particularly in her passion as a seamstress. She sewed for all of her family; bridesmaids' dresses, clothes and accessories for their homes. Her memory will be cherished by her family and friends. Peggy is survived by her nephew, Wes Lockwood; niece, Carrie Ewbank; sisters-in-law, Winnie Lockford and Lorna Chance; great-nephew Nicholas Ewbank and numerous nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband, J. Alan Farnan; her brothers, Sandy and Maynard Chance; father, "Punky" Chance and her stepmother, "Bob" Chance.' (*Tehachapi News* 7 Aug 2007).

<sup>43</sup> 'Imogene Gladys Reynaud, 98, of Lampasas died Aug 18, 2003, at a Lampasas nursing home. Mrs Reynaud was born Feb 4, 1905, in Yorktown, to George C. & Elenora Galle Calhoun. She was married to Oscar Field Reynaud. Mrs. Reynaud moved to Lampasas in 1985 from Houston where she had been a long time resident. Survivors include a daughter, Shirley Duke, of Fort Worth; a granddaughter and her husband, Roberta and Greg Shoopman, of Oviedo, Fla.; and two great-grandsons, Sam Shoopman and Andrew Shoopman, both of Oviedo.' (*Lampasas Dispatch*, 22 Aug 2003)

## JOHN FINCH (1791-1854)

John Finch was born at Heath-Forge, Wombourne, Staffs, on 17 September 1791; younger son of William Finch and Sarah Priestley. It seems his mother had a difficult pregnancy, and, when Dr and Mrs Priestley fled to Heath-Forge at the time of the Birmingham riots, Mrs Priestley remained there until after John's baptism by William Denny Wood, (ca 1744- ca 1822), on 4 November 1791, at the Old Meeting House, Dudley. We know little of John Finch's early life, except that he was interested in geology and had studied the principal books on the subject. He read the Transactions of the Geological Society, studied the geological maps of America produced by William Maclure (1763-1840), and was familiar with the writings of Parker Cleaveland (1780-1858), James Mitchell (ca 1786-1844), and Horace H Hayden (1769-1844). He was also a member of the Birmingham Philosophical Institution, and sometimes, rather grandly, signed himself 'Fellow of the Philosophical Society of Birmingham', and, 'F.B.S.' He was never admitted to a fellowship of the Geological Society.

John Finch left London in November 1822, on the packet-boat *Acasta*, bound for New York. When he arrived he established lodgings on Broadway, then sought out the leading amateur geologists, particularly Major Joseph Delafield (1790-1875) of New York, president of the Lyceum of Natural History; J G Bogert, also of New York; and the plantation owner Major Nathaniel A Ware (1790-1854)<sup>44</sup> of Natchez and Philadelphia. He explored Pennsylvania and New York states, and visited Washington, DC, where he met William Thornton (1759-1828), architect of the Capitol building. In 1825, he visited Virginia, where he met ex-Presidents James Madison Jr (1751-1836) and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) at their respective tobacco plantations of Montpelier and Monticello.<sup>45</sup> From time to time in his travels, Finch gave several series of lectures on geology and mineralogy. His usual practice was to publish an advertisement, and a day or two later to publish a recommendation in the form of an editorial comment, sometimes apprising the public of his grand-filial relationship to Dr Priestley.<sup>46</sup> During a journey to Yorktown, VA,

<sup>44</sup> Writer of the novel *Harvey Belden* (Cincinnati, 1848)

<sup>45</sup> William Thornton to James Madison, 1 Mar 1824: 'My dear Sir, The bearer of this letter, Mr John Finch, is the Grandson of Dr Priestley, who comes recommended to me in the highest manner. He is travelling merely to view the Country, & is not only very desirous of seeing our great mountains and Rivers, but our great men, & of course you & Mr Jefferson. Mr Finch has given Lectures in Geology, and has visited New York & Philad<sup>a</sup>. Your Country will furnish him with many Objects worthy of contemplation. With my most respectful Complim<sup>ts</sup> to your excellent Lady, & Family — I am with the highest respect & consideration Yrs &c. William Thornton.' (Library of Congress, James Madison Papers, William Thornton to James Madison, 1 Mar 1824; [http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mjm.20\\_0761\\_0762](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mjm.20_0761_0762)). Descriptions of Montpelier and Monticello, comprise chapters 33 and 34, respectively, of John Finch's *Travels*.

<sup>46</sup> 'Mr Finch will commence his lectures on Geology, on Wednesday evening, Nov 12, at 7 o'clock at the *Pantheon*, Orange street [Boston]. The introductory will be open to all who may wish to attend, and the lectures will be continued on Wednesday and Friday, until the

Finch collected a large number of fossil molluscs, which he temporarily loaned to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. It has been said, fossils were so common in this area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that locals used them in building foundations and even as dishes. Thomas Say (1787-1834), described Finch's collection and used it to identify and recognize some forty new species, including *Pecten jeffersonius*.<sup>47</sup> Finch brought his collection of fossils back to England, selling them to the British Museum in 1834.<sup>48</sup> Finch also published a numerous articles in 'Silliman's magazine', the *American journal of science and arts*:

- Geological essay on the tertiary formations in America; by John Finch, Fellow of the Philosophical Society of Birmingham, Professor of Geology and Mineralogy, *American journal of science and arts, conducted by Benjamin Silliman* (New-Haven, CT, 1824), vii, 31-43. [Read before Academy of natural sciences, Philadelphia, 15 July 1823]
- On the Celtic antiquities of America; by John Finch FBS, Professor of Geology and Mineralogy, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1824), vii, 149-61
- A sketch of the geology of the country near Easton, Penn, with a catalogue of the minerals, and a map; by J Finch, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1824), viii 236-40.
- On the forts around Boston, which were erected during the War of Independence; by J Finch FBS, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1824), viii, 338-48.
- Memoir on the new or variegated sandstone of the United States; by J Finch, FBS, MCS, &c., *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1825-6), x, 209-12.
- On the tertiary formations on the boarders of the Hudson river; by John Finch, FBS &c, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1825-6), x, 227-9.

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course is concluded. Ticket for a lady or gentleman \$5—family ticket \$10 (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, 27 Oct, 5 Nov & 8 Nov 1823; *Repertory*, 30 Oct 1823). 'We learn that J Finch, who has been lecturing in Philadelphia, upon the subject of Geology, contemplates delivering a course in this Borough [Wilmington]. He will probably commence them in the course of the present week.' (*Delaware Gazette*, 8 May 1827). 'Mr Finch proposes to deliver a popular course of 16 Lectures on Geology and Mineralogy, illustrated by drawings and specimens. A free introductory will be given at Allyn's Hall on Monday evening October 12th, at seven o'clock. The ladies and gentlemen of Hartford are respectfully invited to attend.' (*Connecticut Mirror*, 10 Oct 1829). Finch also lectured in Baltimore, MD (*Baltimore Patriot*, 13 Feb 1824)

<sup>47</sup> 'Account of some of the fossil shells of Maryland,' *Journal Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* (1824), iv, 124-155. See also *National Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), 7 Apr 1825.

<sup>48</sup> The Geological Society, MSS, GSL/L/R/1/52: John Finch, Bristol to William Lonsdale, 6 May 1834 [Brief letter regarding the collection of his boxes of fossils. Lonsdale (1794-1871) was Asst. Secretary and Curator of the Geological Society]. The collection bought by the British Museum comprised 400 specimens from Tertiary strata, representing over 150 species, 100 specimens from the Upper Secondary, and 100 from Transition beds. (R B Newton, *Geological Magazine* [London, 1902], ix, 303)

- On the geology and mineralogy of the country near West Chester, Penn; by J Finch, MCC, &c, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1828) xiv, 15-18.
- On the effect of the physical geography of the world, on the boundaries of empires Pt I; by John Finch, MCS, &c, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1828), xiv, 18-23.
- On the atomic theory of chemistry; by John Finch, MCS, &c, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1828), xiv, 24-29.
- On the effect of the physical geography of the world, on the boundaries of empires Pt II; by John Finch, FBS, MSD, &c, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1829), xvi, 99-111.
- Circular scale of equivalents; by J Finch, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1830), xviii, 196-7.
- Notice of a locality of Arragonite, near New Brunswick, (NJ); by J Finch, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1830), xviii, 197-8.
- Thomson's scientific medals; by J Finch, *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1830), xviii, 198.
- Essay on the mineralogy and geology of St Lawrence County, State of New York; by J Finch, FBS, &c., *American journal of science and arts* (New-Haven, CT, 1831), xix, 220-8.

Several of these articles were advertised for sale separately as 'pamphlets', though it is not clear if these were off-prints or separately set printings. Several of these articles received enthusiastic reviews, suggesting that he either had an active fan-base, or he wrote the reviews himself. The most important of these articles is his Essay on the tertiary formations in America, 1824,<sup>49</sup> which was 'by far the most important contribution to the stratigraphy of the Atlantic Coastal Plain that had appeared up to that time.' It was 'the first attempt at a division of the deposits of the Coastal Plain and their correlation upon scientific grounds; and although thus early in the history of the subject detailed comparisons (which are always unsatisfactory) were made, yet the knowledge of the formations was materially advanced.' Finch wrote:

In America an immense tract of country, extending from Long Island to the Sea of Mexico, and from 30 to 200 miles in width, is called an alluvial formation. From an examination of fossils brought from that quarter of the United States, from a personal inspection of some of its strata, and the perusal of most of the publications which bear a reference to it, I wish to suggest that what is termed the alluvial formation in the geological maps of Messrs. Maclure and Cleaveland is identical and contemporaneous with the

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<sup>49</sup> This has been considered in H S Torrens, 'The Transmission of Ideas in the Use of Fossils in Stratigraphic Analysis from England to America 1800-1840,' *Journal Earth Sciences History* 1990), ix, 108-117.

newer Secondary and Tertiary formations of France, England, Spain, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Iceland, Egypt, and Hindostan.

‘The deposits of various portions of the Middle Atlantic Slope are considered in greater or less detail, and correlations with the strata of other portions of the Coastal Plain and with Europe are attempted.’ Finch wrote:

Many more instances might be advanced to establish the identity of what has been called the alluvial district in America with the Tertiary formation of England and the continent of Europe. The fossil shells from the various beds would not, perhaps, be exactly like those of Europe, but a sufficient number would be found so to establish their relation and order of succession.<sup>50</sup>

In his article on ‘Atomic theory,’ Finch discusses the reasons why water should be considered as triatomic  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , as ‘adopted by Sir H Davy in Great Britian, Berzelius in Sweden, and Gay Lussac and Thenard in France, rather than diatomic HO, as John Dalton had proposed. Finch shows some confusion about the term ‘binary’ which he uses in the sense of ‘diatomic’, and makes the extraordinary proposal that ‘*atmospheric air is a compound*’ [ $\text{N}_4\text{O}$ ], in which four volumes of nitrogen unite to one volume of oxygen, without condensation!

John Finch returned to England at the end of 1831, after which he published his valuable, if anecdotal, *Travels in the United States of America and Canada*.<sup>51</sup> This is appended with: *An essay on the natural boundaries of empires*, which he republished separately in 1844.<sup>52</sup> A contemporary American review, recalls John Finch as a quiet and inoffensive gentleman. ‘He has furnished very little indeed that can be deemed new or important concerning American institutions and affairs; but he breathes only good will and respect to the people and country. The principal trait of his book is *simplicity*.’<sup>53</sup>

John Finch spent some time in Bristol, before moving to London, where he lived at 33 Kenton Street, Brunswick Square.<sup>54</sup> Never marrying, he died in February 1854, and was buried in Highgate cemetery on 22 February 1854.

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<sup>50</sup> Department of the Interior, *Bulletin of the United States geological survey no. 141* (Washington, 1896), 18, 24.

<sup>51</sup> *Travels in the United States of America and Canada: containing some account of their scientific institutions, and a few notices of the geology and mineralogy of those countries: to which is added, an essay On the natural boundaries of empires*, by I. Finch, esq. cor. mem. Nat. Hist. Soc. Montreal; Lit. & Hist. Soc. Quebec; hon. mem. West Point Lyceum, Delaware, West Chester, &c. &c. (London, 1833).

<sup>52</sup> John Finch, *The Natural Boundaries of Empires; and a new view of colonization* (London, 1844). This is a reprint of the two similarly named articles in the *American journal of science and arts*.

<sup>53</sup> *National Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), 17 October 1833.

<sup>54</sup> The 1851 census describes his occupation as ‘author: science and history.’